

"WAIT FOR ME"

FADE IN:

EXT. LOS ANGELES SKYLNE - MORNING

Morning smog hangs heavily over the city.

A MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

When I'm dying, I want someone to
be sucking my dick. I don't care
who it is. I just want that to be
the last thing I ever feel.

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

NATE, Caucasian, a rugged 40, stands close to a floor-to-ceiling window and gazes at the downtown buildings.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

The odds of that happening are
incredibly miniscule.

NATE

Not if you plan it right.

DR. BECKHAM, Caucasian female with a British accent (50s) sits opposite Nate's empty chair in a futuristic office. Matching contemporary wing-back chairs of rich maroon contrasting to the decor of blues and grays and brushed steel.

DR. BECKHAM

Nate, is this something you're
thinking about planning?

NATE

No.

DR. BECKHAM

When was the last time you had
anonymous sex?

NATE

(lying)
Before Ellie.

INT. ELLIE'S WESTWOOD CONDO - AFTERNOON

ELLIE, Caucasian brunette, fresh 30s, satin blouse, sits on the toilet with her arm stretched down between her legs. We cannot see her hand.

Ellie stares into space, then the sound of a stream of urine. The stream stops. A pregnancy test strip comes into view.

She watches the clock. Time is up. Looks at the strip. Becomes visibly upset.

Ellie wanders through her bedroom to retrieve her cell phone. Enters numbers slowly and deliberately.

INT. NATE'S CAR - AFTERNOON

Nate drives down Wilshire Boulevard in his 2010 midnight blue BMW 750Li sedan.

The cell phone tossed onto the plush black leather passenger seat of Nate's car rings.

He checks the caller ID before flipping the phone open.

INTERCUT - TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

NATE
Hey, gorgeous.

ELLIE
(shaken)
Hi. How are you?

NATE
No complaints. Wish you were with me, though.

ELLIE
You're sweet.

NATE
What's up?

ELLIE
Uhm, nothing really. I guess I just wanted to see how your day was going. Hear your voice, you know?

NATE
Are you okay?

ELLIE
Yeah.

NATE
Okay.

He turns into a parking garage.

NATE
I just pulled up to my next
appointment. Call you later?

ELLIE
Promise?

NATE
Yep.

ELLIE
Bye.

BACK TO ELLIE'S CONDO

She closes her cell phone and stares out the window.
Comforts herself with a hug.

EXT. PARKING GARAGE - MINUTES LATER

He pulls into a parking space and turns the car off. Sits
for more than a moment in the darkness of the garage with his
sunglasses still on. Sighs heavily.

INT. PARENTS' DEN - EVENING

MARIE (60s), Ellie's mother, well-maintained, stands in front
of the fireplace holding a glass of wine in one hand. Gazes
at a picture of her children on the mantel.

JAMES (60s), Ellie's father, proud to have earned every line
on his face, fixes himself a highball at the bar in the
background.

JAMES
I don't get it. At their age, I
had a wife and kids and was fifteen
years into my career. You were out
of the house at seventeen, for
crying out loud.

MARIE
It isn't easy to start your own
business. It takes time and money.

JAMES
No, it doesn't. It takes good
looks and luck. And my money.

MARIE
Our money.

JAMES

Does it really matter whose it is
once it's all gone?

She hears the front door open. Heads towards the foyer.
Stops and turns toward him slightly, sips her wine.

MARIE

Just talk to them.

Rests the glass on the grand piano, continues towards foyer.

MARIE

Ellie?

ELLIE (O.S.)

Can you help me with this?

INT. PARENTS' FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Marie greets Ellie as she attempts to close the door, holding
a large Viktor Benes box in one hand and her car keys and
purse in the other.

MARIE

What's this?

She kisses her daughter on the cheek and takes the box.

ELLIE

Princess torte.

MARIE

Thank you, sweetheart. I'll put it
in the kitchen. Your father's in
the den.

She heads for the kitchen with the box.

ELLIE

Wait.

Ellie lays her keys and purse in the chair next to the door.
Fumbles through the purse and produces a white envelope.
Presents the envelope to her mother.

ELLIE

Here.

Marie stands there holding the boxed cake, unsure what to do.

ELLIE

I can't keep taking this. It makes me feel like shit.

MARIE

Honey, have you paid your car note this month?

ELLIE

Touche.

MARIE

Put that away before your father sees it.

INT. PARENTS' DEN - CONTINUOUS

ELLIE

Hi, Dad.

JAMES

Hey, peanut. Would you like a glass of your Mom's Kendall Jackson?

ELLIE

Sparkling water, maybe with a splash of cranberry.

She crosses to the bar, rubs her father's back and gives it a pat.

JAMES

Wedge of lime?

ELLIE

Yeah, thanks. Where's Patrick?

JAMES

He had to close up late tonight.

Marie returns from the dining room.

ELLIE

How's it going?

JAMES

He had a few painters come in at the last minute.

ELLIE

I meant overall, in general.

JAMES
He works hard.

Ellie's brother, PATRICK (30s), handsome, enters the den unnoticed.

ELLIE
Can't he just hire someone to stay late?

PATRICK
You're welcome to help out anytime.

MARIE
Play nice.

Marie crosses towards her son.

ELLIE
Dad just said you were working late.

PATRICK
I was.

His mother kisses him on the cheek.

MARIE
The two of you are not in competition. I've told you before... what we do for one, we do for the other.

ELLIE
Don't be silly, Mom. I'm happy for Patrick. One day he'll be making so much money -

PATRICK
You're worried about your inheritance. We all know it.

ELLIE
You're an ass.

PATRICK
Said the pot to the kettle.

She tosses a couch pillow at him.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - NIGHT

The building sits mostly in the dark, late after-business hours.

Target a row of windows lining a boardroom lit by fluorescent office lights.

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

Boardroom in the background illuminated in contrast to the dark work space in the foreground. Everyone else has gone home. Computers are turned off, desks are cleaned up.

Through the glass wall of the boardroom are Nate and two clients clustered at one end of a long table, hunched over a design drawing.

Muffled conversation precedes abrupt laughter of all three men. The meeting is over as Nate rolls up his drawings, packs up his briefcase, exchanges handshakes, and heads out the glass door.

He walks down the darkened corridor.

INT. PARENTS' DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The family dines at a long table.

JAMES
Where's this Nick?

ELLIE
Nate.

JAMES
Nate. Why couldn't Nate join us
this evening?

ELLIE
He had a meeting.

JAMES
We ever going to meet this guy?

PATRICK
What's wrong with him?

Ellie remains silent.

PATRICK
What? I was joking.

ELLIE

He has a demanding schedule. Not
unlike someone else at this table.

INT. OFFICE HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Nate pushes elevator button and waits. Ding. Doors open.
He goes inside.

ELLIE (V.O.)

Funny thing...he says he sees me
more than anyone else in his life.

INT. BUILDING LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Elevator doors open and Nate emerges.

He walks past a pizza parlor. As an after-thought, he ducks
into a pharmacy next to the parlor.

INT. PHARMACY - MOMENTS LATER

As he looks at the potted plants, he notices a SHOPPER,
female (30s), in the next aisle.

He strolls over to the woman and makes small talk. She
giggles and runs her fingers through her hair.

CUT TO:

She holds up one of the plants with a big blue bow on it.

SHOPPER

This one. But lose the bow.

NATE

Excellent. Thank you.

SHOPPER

My pleasure!

CUT TO:

Nate pays for the plant at the checkout counter as the
SHOPPER walks past.

NATE

Thank you, again. I'll call you.

SHOPPER

I hope you mother feels better!

He watches her exit the store.

NATE
 (to cashier)
 Do you have a public restroom?

CASHIER
 In the lobby.

INT. MEN'S RESTROOM - CONTINUOUS

Potted plant, briefcase, and drawing canister in hand, Nate looks around the room. He decides to set the plant onto a counter.

Nate goes into a stall.

He puts down his briefcase and canister.

While sitting, his blank stare changes expression ever so slightly.

ON THE STALL DOOR

Graffiti appears:

"TAP FOOT -
 SHOW HARD."

BACK TO NATE

Looks to his right. A glory hole.

Looks through the hole. No one is there.

Nate stands. Toilet flushes. He pulls his pants up, grabs belongings, exits.

INT. PARENTS' DEN - LATER

Ellie, James, Marie, and Patrick enjoy after-dinner drinks. Patrick tinkers on the piano. James channel surfs the giant HD TV, volume barely audible.

ELLIE
 Does it bother you that you don't
 have any grandchildren?

PATRICK
 That they know of.

MARIE
 No, honey, of course not. Why?

PATRICK
She's looking at sperm donors.

ELLIE
Can you stop for just one moment?
One small, little -

MARIE
Honey, what is it?

PATRICK
Her clock is ticking.

Patrick sees that his sister is really upset.

PATRICK
You're young, you know.

Doorbell rings.

PATRICK
Oh, thank God.

EXT. PARENTS' FRONT DOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Holding the potted plant, Nate practices saying hello. He quickly snatches the big blue ribbon off the plant, tries to shove it into his pocket, but resorts to tossing it in the bushes when he is caught by the opening of the front door.

James gives an inquisitive look from inside.

NATE
Good evening, sir. I'm Nate. Nate
Galloway. You must be James.

JAMES
Isn't that what they say?

NATE
Sir?

JAMES
Better late than never.

Awkward silence.

NATE
I brought a plant.

James stares at him. Suddenly, he erupts in laughter.

INT. PARENTS' DEN - MOMENTS LATER

James nurses a cocktail, shoes off and feet up.

Nate and Ellie occupy the sofa. Patrick drops a drink into Nate's hand and continues to the closest chair.

NATE
(to Patrick)
Ellie tells me you're a sole proprietor?

PATRICK
I have a studio where you can paint pottery.

NATE
I love to paint.

PATRICK
Come down sometime.

NATE
What's the name of it?

PATRICK
A pot to paint in.

NATE
Clever.

Marie enters with a watering pot. Heads straight for Nate's plant, having already found the perfect spot for it.

MARIE
(watering plant)
Are you sure I can't warm something up for you?

NATE
No, thank you, ma'am. I'm holding out for a piece of that cake Ellie brought.

JAMES
Your clients tonight. You said they were from somewhere in Egypt?

ELLIE
Port Said, near Cairo.

Nate looks over at Ellie, smiles proudly, kisses her.

NATE
One of my more challenging
projects, to say the least.

INT. PARENTS' KITCHEN - LATER

A silver serving wedge digs into the princess torte.

MARIE
I think he's adorable.

JAMES
You're picking out invitations
already.

MARIE
I'm just saying -

James playfully shoves a piece of cake in her mouth.

JAMES
Don't talk. Chew.

INT. HALLOWEEN PARTY HOUSE - NIGHT

Living room packed with PARTY-GOERS in costume. Dancing,
drinking, socializing.

Ellie, dressed as Cleopatra, picks at a plate of finger-food
as she sits on a sofa next to BLAIRE (30), African-American,
beautiful, dressed as a sexy Playboy bunny.

BLAIRE
You seem a little edgy. You
haven't told him yet, have you?

MATT (35), dressed as Hugh Hefner, and Nate, dressed as Marc
Anthony, interrupt the conversation.

MATT
(handing drink to Blaire)
Sorry. The bar was packed.

NATE
(to Ellie)
Come with me.

He grabs her plate of food and sets it down.

Taking her hand, he leads her past the crowd and through the
front door.

EXT. HALLOWEEN PARTY HOUSE - NIGHT

Alone, the two of them walk to his car.

NATE

I'm not good with high school scenes.

They walk a bit more until they reach his car.

He kisses her. Soft to passionate to rough and aggressive.

Bodies rubbing, hands groping.

He moves her around to the more discreet side of his car, opens rear door.

She lies face up in the backseat, he on top of her, kissing her, dry-fucking.

They stop for a moment and gaze into each other's eyes.

He back-crawls out of the car.

NATE

Turn over.

She gets into doggie-style position, backed all the way to the edge of the seat for easy access.

Nate, now standing, looks out above the roof of the car. alone, completely disconnected from Ellie. But we can hear both of them moaning.

INT. NATE'S BEDROOM - MORNING - DREAM

Nate is in bed with MANDY (early 30s), with vibrant auburn hair. The room is filled with beiges and whites. A crisp and clean white sheet covers them.

As he sleeps, she stares at him lovingly.

She straddles him, playfully sways her long auburn hair over his face and chest, attempts to wake him. The spaghetti-strap of her camisole falls innocently down her arm.

MANDY

Wake up. Who loves you?

He begins to stir.

NATE

Good morning, beautiful.

They kiss. Loving, gentle, soft.

MANDY

I love you. I love you so much.

CUT TO:

INT. NATE'S BEDROOM - MORNING - PRESENT

Nate wakes up suddenly. He didn't draw the curtains the night before. The sun shines brightly onto his face.

Obviously disturbed from the dream and stunned that he still has these emotions locked up inside of him, he endures.

SERIES OF SHOTS - NATE'S WEEKDAY MORNING ROUTINE

-- INT. NATE'S BATHROOM

A) Stares at himself in the mirror.

B) Stands motionless in the shower, the water cascading off his head.

C) Methodically trims his goatee.

-- INT. NATE'S BEDROOM

A) Curls dumbbells.

B) Does some push-ups.

-- INT. NATE'S KITCHEN

A) Cooks egg whites.

B) Pours coffee.

As he eats at the table...

WHAM! Slams his fist onto the table. Emotions exude.

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY

NATE

She wasn't supposed to leave me.
She wasn't supposed to find
somebody else.

DR. BECKHAM

Why not?

NATE

We loved each other. My life was set.

DR. BECKHAM

We've talked about this before.

NATE

What?

DR, BECKHAM

Whatever is supposed to -

NATE

Don't do that. Don't! I don't want to hear that bullshit! It's pathetic!

Dr. Beckham remains silent.

NATE

That's weak. It's an excuse for the guy who doesn't have the balls to go after what he wants in life.

DR. BECKHAM

You're doing so well.

NATE

No, no, I'm not. I'm not doing well. I need her to say I'm sorry. I need to hear it. I need to hear the words. I need to know that she's truly remorseful. And I'll never hear her say it.

Nate stands. He looks out the window.

NATE

The worst thing in the world you can do to me is ignore me. She ignored me. She wrote me off. That's why I'm still here.

INT. ELLIE'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Ellie walks through the front door carrying groceries. Passes through the living area, disappears into the kitchen.

INT. ELLIE'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

She puts the bags on the counter, picks up her cell phone and dials, then begins to put the groceries away.

EXT. MANDY'S HOUSE

Nate's sedan is parked on the street in front of his ex-girlfriend's Hollywood Hills home.

INT. NATE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Nate sits in silence.

The cell phone tossed onto the passenger seat rings.

He checks the caller ID, lets it go to voicemail.

INT. ELLIE'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Ellie continues to unpack groceries. Six rings.

She stops what she's doing in frustration as she gets voicemail again.

NATE (V.O.)

"You've reached Nate. Leave a message."

INT. NATE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Nate's cell phone is still in his hand as he waits for the beep indicating a message. Beep. He checks the message...

ELLIE (V.O.)

Hi...sorry I missed you again. Can we make it eight instead? The grocery store was a madhouse. Call if there's a problem. Bye.

...then tosses the phone back onto the seat.

Dusk turns into night.

Nate stares straight ahead.

Mandy appears from her house.

Nate watches intently.

She walks to her car in the driveway, gets in, starts the engine, backs out.

He moves to turn his ignition key, hesitates.

She drives away oblivious.

He falls back into the seat.

INT. ELLIE'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

Ellie sits on her sofa drinking a glass of wine, watching TV, a little tipsy.

The doorbell rings.

She turns off the TV, opens the front door.

Nate stares back at her.

NATE
I had to work late.

One hand on the doorknob, she motions for him to come in.

ELLIE
Are you hungry?

NATE
No.

She sits on the sofa, he next to her. Uncomfortable silence.

NATE
I'm difficult to date. I know that.

ELLIE
What's so difficult about blowing off dinner?

NATE
People keep leaving my life, and I don't know why.

Nate stands up.

NATE
I shouldn't have come over. I'm so sorry.

He leaves, closing the door behind him.

ELLIE
Wait!

Frustrated, she rises and locks the dead bolt, leans her back against the door.

INT. EQUINOX PILATES STUDIO - DAY

Ellie guides a full class through a pilates workout, music plays in the background.

ELLIE

Come on, everyone. Squeeze those
glutes as you move your ankles in.
Keep it going, eight more.

Several FEMALE PILATES CLIENTS and one MALE PILATES CLIENT are working the pilates machines in the room.

ELLIE

And six... and four... good job,
ladies. You, too, Eric.

INT. EQUINOX FRONT DESK - LATER

Ellie reviews her class schedule with the CLUB MANAGER.

ELLIE

I think we should add another class
next month. The Tuesday mornings
are always overbooked.

CLUB MANAGER

Can't we just put more machines in
there?

ELLIE

We're packed as it is.

DEN, Filipino (30s), enters the club in a suit and tie, carries a gym bag. Flashes his membership card at the front desk for scanning.

FRONT DESK ATTENDANT

Enjoy your workout.

He notices Ellie and smiles.

DEN

Ellie.

ELLIE

Hi.

He continues past her and into the club.

CLUB MANAGER

...so add another class. Let me see the schedule before the next manager's meeting.

ELLIE

(distracted)

Okay, sure.

INT. EQUINOX LADIES' STEAMROOM - LATER

Ellie lounges. Hair wrapped in a towel, eyes closed, she lets the steam do its thing.

INT. EQUINOX LADIES' LOCKER ROOM - LATER

Freshly dressed and with wet hair, Ellie transfers her locker contents to her gym bag.

INT. EQUINOX LADIES' LOCKER ROOM EXIT - LATER

Ellie exits the locker room to find Den waiting for her.

ELLIE

What are you doing?

DEN

We need to talk.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - LATER

Den and Ellie sip coffees at a table.

DEN

Think about it a little while longer. That's all I'm asking.

ELLIE

I've thought about it so much my head hurts. I appreciate what you're trying to do, but this doesn't involve you.

DEN

But it could involve me. Easily. I'm presenting you with a wonderful option here, an opportunity. I'm not asking you to marry me. I want to be a father.

ELLIE

I want to be a mother. Oh, God, I want to be a mother. But Nate...

DEN
Does he know?

ELLIE
My appointment is in a few days.

DEN
He has a right to know.

ELLIE
Who is this about? I'm not going to get into a Roe versus Wade debate with you! Do you realize how much I've struggled with this? This is the most difficult situation I've ever been in. Ever. I get it, I get what's at stake here. Look, I honestly don't think I could just hand my child over to you.

DEN
We could raise the child together -

ELLIE
Enough! Den, you're a dear and sweet friend, but stop. Please.

He fishes money out of his pocket, places it on the table and leaves.

Ellie buries her face in her hands, collects herself, digs through her purse for her cell phone, and calls Nate. Gets his voicemail.

ELLIE
Hey, it's me. I haven't heard from you in a few days. Listen, uhm... I need to talk to you about something. Can you call me as soon as you get this? Thanks, Nate.
Bye.

MONTAGE - NATE WALKS ON A BUSY DAYTIME DOWNTOWN SIDEWALK

-- Nate with architectural tube and briefcase avoids most pedestrians, bumps into a few.

-- A PRETTY WOMAN with a stoic, emotionless and affected look, walks in the crowd.

-- Nate continues to navigate through the traffic.

-- A SECOND PRETTY WOMAN walks among the crowd...

-- A THIRD PRETTY WOMAN walks by...

-- A FOURTH PRETTY WOMAN walks by and accidentally bumps into Nate.

-- They make brief eye contact. His pace slows.

-- As she continues, she glances back.

-- He stops and turns.

--Their eyes meet briefly again, then she turns and walks away.

-- After a moment, he turns back around and continues on his way as well.

EXT. A POT TO PAINT IN - DAY

A creative sandwich board meticulously designed by Patrick sits in front of the store.

ON THE BOARD:

"A POT TO PAINT IN"

INT. A POT TO PAINT IN - DAY

Ellie helps Patrick load a kiln with glazed pottery.

ELLIE

It's only been a few days. I'm sure he'll call.

PATRICK

He's just not that into you. You should see that movie.

ELLIE

Let's go to New York for Christmas. I need to get out of LA. I haven't been back to the city since forever. I miss it.

PATRICK

You love him.

ELLIE

That's ridiculous.

PATRICK

It's because he's eluding you. We all want what we can't have.

ELLIE

I'm more mature than that.

PATRICK

He's under your skin. You need to relax. Be cool, you know? Okay, look... we'll go to New York.

ELLIE

I need money.

PATRICK

Mom and Dad'll pay for it.

ELLIE

No. I mean... I've gotten myself into sort of a bind.

PATRICK

When are you not in a bind?

ELLIE

Ask Dad for it. Tell him it's for the studio.

PATRICK

What's going on?

ELLIE

I'm pregnant. I can't have it. I don't want to ask Dad myself. I would have to lie, and then he would be able to tell, and then I'd have to tell him the truth. I can't tell him. I don't want to tell him. I don't want him to know.

(Pause)

What? Stop staring at me.

PATRICK

You seem awfully calm about it.

ELLIE

I can't think about it anymore or I'll... I just want to get this over with. Can you... would you just... you know, do this for me?

(MORE)

ELLIE (cont'd)
 (long beat)
 Patrick.

PATRICK
 Okay. Alright.

INT. NATE'S OFFICE - EVENING

Nate stares at his drawing board, revising his latest design. Tosses his glasses off and leans back in the stool, rubs his eyes, rests for a moment.

His cell phone rings.

Looks at the caller ID: Blocked.

Thinks about it, then answers it.

NATE
 This is Nate.

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
 I've missed you... our little
 excursions.

NATE
 Really? You have me at a
 disadvantage.

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
 It's been... what? Four years?

INT. HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

HEATHER (20's), the memorable blonde from the busy downtown sidewalk, lays on the bed as she speaks into the phone.

INTERCUT - TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

NATE
 Too long, apparently. I still
 don't -

HEATHER
 We ran into each other. Literally.
 Earlier, on the street. I'm back
 in town. Just for the night.

NATE
 I thought you looked familiar. As
 fun as this is -

HEATHER
 (calmly, then commanding)
 It's Heather. Mistress Heather.

NATE
 Wow. Yes. How are you?

HEATHER
 Does it matter? What matters is
 I'm back in town for the night.
 What do you say we go exploring?

NATE
 Naughty.

HEATHER
 Have you been, now? I'll take that
 as a yes to my 'one night only'?

NATE
 Time, place?

BACK TO NATE'S OFFICE

Nate smiles, flips the phone shut and sits in satisfaction.

He e-mails Ellie.

ON THE MONITOR

Nate's words appear:

"I got your message. Are you
 okay? Something urgent has come
 up. I will call you tomorrow."

BACK TO NATE

He resumes work on the drawing board.

We catch a glimpse of his arrogance. He's got it all under
 control, and he's going to have hot, meaningless, anything-
 but-vanilla sex tonight.

EXT. MONDRIAN HOTEL - NIGHT

Valet circle filled with activity.

Nate pulls up in his sedan, tosses the keys. Dressed in a
 tuxedo and carrying a bottle of champagne, he hurries past
 the commotion and into the lobby.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Proceeds to the elevator, passes the attendant at the rope and disappears behind the closing doors.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - NIGHT

Elevator doors open. Nate doesn't move. Doors begin to close. He stops the doors with his hand and holds them open forever. Door alarm begins to sound.

He frantically pushes the button for the first floor lobby.

INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

Nate watches the floor buttons sequentially lighting up.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

Elevator doors open, and Nate stands motionless inside.

ELEVATOR ATTENDANT waits, then holds door open for him, but he doesn't budge.

ELEVATOR ATTENDANT

Sir?

Nate awakens. Searches for his wallet and pulls out a twenty.

NATE

(handing bill to
attendant)

Forgot. Sorry.

ELEVATOR ATTENDANT

Thank you, sir.

Elevator doors close on Nate.

INT HOTEL HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Nate walks down a long hallway to room 1206 and presses the intercom buzzer/doorbell.

The door opens. Heather stands in full dominatrix gear. Nate holds up the champagne.

NATE

To celebrate our 'one night only'.

HEATHER

Enter.

He enters, the door closes.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dark. Shades are drawn. Leather straps, ropes, etc., candles burning, obvious heavy bondage scene.

Nate grabs two champagne flutes from bar shelf and pops open the bottle.

He turns around to finally see a VOYEUR (early 30s), in good shape, hidden in the shadows, sitting in a chair in the corner.

HEATHER
My husband.

NATE
You're married now.

VOYEUR
We have an open relationship.

HEATHER
I've changed since you knew me so well.

NATE
Not so much.

HEATHER
Shut up and get undressed.

He puts the flutes down.

NATE
This isn't my thing.

He heads for the door.

She stops him and kisses him hard, rubs his crotch hard.

HEATHER
Isn't it, though? He just wants to watch.

VOYEUR
We have blow.

NATE
Do I look like a coke whore?

VOYEUR
Taste it, it's good.

Heather grabs a mirror out from under the bar. Pours a pile of coke from a vial onto the mirror, cuts a few lines with a credit card.

Rolls up a Benjamin, does a line, hands the bill to Nate.

He does a line, looks up, offers the bill to the voyeur.

The voyeur advances towards the bill.

NATE
(retracting bill)
I thought you were just here to watch.

Voyeur retreats back to his seat.

Nate grabs a pair of bondage cuffs and hands them to Heather.

NATE
Strap him down.

HEATHER
What?

VOYEUR
(sly chuckle)
I was hoping you'd say that.

NATE
(to Heather)
He can't leave the chair. Do it.

Nate drinks champagne and does a few more lines as Heather straps the voyeur into the chair.

She slowly approaches Nate, commanding control again.

HEATHER
(whispering into his ear,
but forcefully)
Now. Get undressed.

NATE
Yes, Mistress Heather.

FADE TO BLACK.

MONTAGE - S/M BONDAGE SCENE

- A whip parts the shirt covering Nate's chest.
- Heather's lips bite Nate's ear.
- Nate snorts a line of coke off of Heather's stiletto boot.
- A rope tightens around Nate's wrist.
- Nate lays naked, face down on the bed with wrists bound to headboard.
- A paddle raises in air then slams down.
- The paddle slams into Nate's bare butt.
- The voyeur watches.
- The paddle slams down again.
- And again.

The paddling stops. Nate, high on cocaine, exhausted, breathes heavily, worn out.

Heather approaches the voyeur and removes his straps.

The voyeur gets up, grabs champagne bottle off the bar and swigs straight from the bottle.

Nate realizes that the voyeur is loose.

NATE
What the fuck.

Voyeur and Heather strap Nate's ankles to the bed.

NATE
That's it. Game over. Pistachio.

HEATHER
You really have been naughty. I'm going to teach you a lesson.

NATE
I don't like this. I don't want this.

Heather smiles.

NATE

You've lost it. No joke. That's enough.

(panicking)

Pistachio! Pistachio! That's the safe word, you cunt!

HEATHER

You knew that I was in love with you.

NATE

Damnit! Fuck! Stop! You bitch. You crazy -

Heather puts a red rubber ball gag into his mouth. Voyeur's hands secure the gag buckle behind Nate's head.

Heather caresses Nate's face.

HEATHER

You discarded me.

Voyeur grabs the champagne bottle again.

VOYEUR

Welcome to the real party.

Voyeur holds the bottle upside down above his head as the last of the champagne flows into his mouth and over his face.

VOYEUR

Where shall I leave the bottle?

Nate screams once and then again. Voyeur rapes him with the champagne bottle. Nate jolts with intense pain with each thrust.

HEATHER

I am not disposable.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Empty hallway. Screaming from room is barely audible all the way down the long corridor.

INT. ELLIE'S KITCHEN - DAY

Ellie, frazzled that Nate has not called her yet, talks to herself as she makes a sandwich, slicing a tomato.

ELLIE
Fucker. Fucking e-mail, what is
that. This is ridiculous. Get a
hold of yourself, girl.

After a deep breath, she continues with the sandwich,
spreading mustard on the bread. She can't take it. She
picks up her cell phone and yells at it.

ELLIE
Ring! Ring, goddamnit!

INT. ELLIE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

ELLIE
One good e-mail deserves another.

She sits at her desk, typing furiously on her computer as she
banters with herself.

She suddenly stops typing as though giving up.

ELLIE
This is stupid.
(to herself)
You're not in high school anymore.
Call him if you want to call him.

She picks up her cell, lays on the bed, and bangs the digits
into the phone.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

A HOTEL MANAGER converses with a POLICE CHIEF and OFFICER
RACKLEY.

HOTEL MANAGER
A housekeeper made the discovery
during her routine cleaning.

A cell phone rings. The chief looks around.

POLICE CHIEF
...one second.

It's coming from the tuxedo jacket draped over a chair.

POLICE CHIEF
Rackley, get that. It may be a
family member.

Officer Rackley retrieves the phone.

INTERCUT - TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

OFFICER RACKLEY

This is Officer Rackley with the
Los Angeles Police Department. To
whom am I speaking?

ELLIE

Very funny.

OFFICER RACKLEY

Yes, ma'am, this is Officer
Rackley, LAPD. Do you know a Nate
Galloway?

ELLIE

What? Oh, come on...

OFFICER RACKLEY

Again, ma'am, I'm asking if you
know a Mr. Nate Galloway. I am a
police officer with -

ELLIE

Yes, I know him. This isn't a
joke, is it?

OFFICER RACKLEY

No, ma'am. To whom am I speaking,
and what is your relationship to
Mr. Galloway?

She sits up on the edge of the bed.

ELLIE

This is Ellie Roberts. I'm a close
friend of his. What's going on, is
he okay? Why do you have his cell
phone?

OFFICER RACKLEY

Would you be willing to come down
to the Mondrian Hotel as soon as
possible?

BACK TO HOTEL ROOM.

Nate sits on the bed.

HOTEL MANAGER

I think he's more embarrassed than
anything else.

POLICE CHIEF
(discretely)
It's not every day you're found
strapped to a bed with a champagne
bottle up your ass.

INT. NATE'S PATIO - EVENING

Ellie and Nate sit in silence on an outdoor sofa, gazing at a candle on the table in front of them, not seeing it at all.

NATE
What I need to know is what this
means to you and me.

Ellie faces him. Stares into his eyes for the longest time.

ELLIE
I'm not going anywhere.

INT. NATE'S BEDROOM - LATER

Nate lies in bed on his back, Ellie tucked under one arm, laptop resting on his belly. His free hand manipulates the touchpad and keyboard.

NATE
This is in London.

ELLIE
It's beautiful. Wow. You're
really talented. Is that all the
same place?

The laptop screen shows a slide presentation of his most beautiful architectural creations, his visual resume.

NATE
No, this is in Monte Carlo, and
this one is -

ELLIE
Wait, can you make it go back to
that one? Oh, I really like that.
Is that gold?

NATE
I fought that. It's tacky, but
it's what they wanted.

ELLIE
Where is that?

NATE
Saudi Arabia.

ELLIE
You must be... you're well-known in
your profession, in architectural
design, am I right?

Nate laughs.

ELLIE
Show me something in Paris. I love
Paris. Not that I've ever been,
but I want to go.

NATE
(laughing)
I don't have any clients in Paris.
I've never been there, either.

He puts the laptop aside and kisses her.

INT. NATE'S KITCHEN - MORNING

Ellie sips coffee at the table.

Nate hovers over a pan on the stove.

NATE
These aren't going to be omelettes,
they're more like scrambled eggs
that look like omelettes.

ELLIE
How did you get to be so good at
what you do? Did it come
naturally, or did you have to
figure it out?

NATE
This is what I'm supposed to be
doing, I guess.

ELLIE
How old were you when you knew this
is what you wanted to do?

NATE
I don't remember.

ELLIE
You do have a gift, you know.

NATE
I suppose so.

ELLIE
So, you woke up one morning and
said, I think I'll be an architect.
(beat)
Was your Dad an architect?

NATE
No.

ELLIE
Work with me here. I feel like I'm
pulling teeth.

Nate stops cooking and looks at her sincerely.

NATE
I don't mean to be that way.

ELLIE
Forget it.
(changing the subject)
Blaire is having a get-together for
Matt's birthday. Wanna go?

NATE
When is it?

ELLIE
The Saturday after Thanksgiving.

She walks up behind him and wraps her arms around him.

NATE
I'll be in Miami. Rain check?

ELLIE
Okay.

He takes the breakfast plates to the table as they sit.

ELLIE
So, I'm going to New York with my
family for Christmas.

NATE
That'll be fun.

ELLIE

Hey, I know it's kinda far off, but do you want to spend New Year's Eve together? I have to make my flight arrangements pretty soon.

NATE

Why don't I go with you to New York, and we'll fly back together for New Year's?

Ellie runs out of the kitchen. Heads for the bathroom, yelling to him as she goes.

ELLIE

That's a great idea!

INT. NATE'S GUEST BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Ellie crouches next to the toilet, heaving.

After a moment, she collects herself, then rises to the sink.

She collects water in her hands and wets her face. Discovers mouthwash in the medicine cabinet, washes her mouth out.

Hunched over, she stares at herself in the mirror. Stands erect, then turns sideways to view her profile. Puts her hand underneath her blouse and stretches the blouse out like she is pregnant.

Stares at her profile a long time.

ELLIE

This really is happening.

INT. OUTSIDE NATE'S GUEST BATHROOM DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Nate stands outside the bathroom door with his plate, eating.

NATE

What's going on in there? Are you alright?

ELLIE (O/S)

(laughing)

I will be out in a minute!

NATE

(shrugging it off, eating)

Okay.

He walks back to the kitchen.

INT. NATE'S GUEST BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ellie controls her laughter. A comfortable calmness enters her body. She turns from her profile to face the mirror.

ELLIE

You son of a bitch. You're gonna
be a father.

INT. ART CLASS - EVENING

Nate works on a painting. Bright colors and shapes indicate a modern abstract piece.

The INSTRUCTOR, female (40s), paces the room. She guides students as she wanders.

Nate takes in his work with an ever-so-slight smile.

INT. LOEW'S GRAND HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

SANTA'S HELPER passes out eggnog to lobby visitors.

James waits at the front of a long check-in line.

Patrick and Nate take in the Christmas Tree as they stand guard with the luggage on the bellhop cart.

Ellie and her mother join them with eggnog in hand.

MARIE

(handing an eggnog to
Patrick)

Take this to your father. He's
been in that line for a long time.
Never mind, here he comes.

James approaches with room cards in hand.

JAMES

(passing out cards)

Okay, here we go. I managed to get
us all next to each other.

The group begins its trek to the elevator.

Nate looks at the lobby bar and then at Patrick.

NATE

(to Patrick)

Do you know her?

PATRICK

Who?

NATE

Who? The red-head. Oh, come on, you can't be that blind.

PATRICK

I guess I am. Oh. Well, hello.
(to rest of family)
Okay, you guys have this?

ELLIE

You two are pathetic.

Ellie snatches Patrick's tote bag away from him.

PATRICK

You're a doll.

NATE

I'll have him back in time for dinner.

Nate puts his duffel bag on the bellhop cart, leads Patrick to the bar.

EXT. RADIO CITY MUSIC HALL - NIGHT

Ellie and her father watch toys come to life above the marquee.

JAMES

Are the Rockettes still on strike?

ELLIE

Dad, that was years ago.

They start walking down Sixth Avenue.

JAMES

Talk to your old man.

ELLIE

Okay. About what.

JAMES

Well, let me see here. Just off the top of my head. There's a young man who is not a member of our family spending Christmas in New York with our family.

(MORE)

JAMES (cont'd)
Should I be thinking that he might
one day become a member of our
family?

ELLIE
Did Mom put you up to this?

JAMES
No. Maybe.

She takes his arm.

ELLIE
I like the guy.

JAMES
How well do you know him?

ELLIE
Dad!

JAMES
Sometimes you don't seem all that
confident about him.

ELLIE
He is the most complicated man I
have ever met.

INT. AMBASSADOR THEATRE ORCHESTRA SEATING - LATER

Nate sits comfortably in his seat next to Ellie, holding her hand. Ellie's parents and brother occupy the adjoining seats.

Nate attempts to enjoy the unmistakable performance of "All That Jazz" from CHICAGO, the musical.

Ellie leans over to whisper into his ear.

ELLIE
I told you we could have gone to
something else.

NATE
Nonsense. Your parents have never
seen it.

ON THE STAGE

The latest actress cast in the role of Velma Kelly gives it her best.

BACK TO NATE

He sits still and calm.

He stirs, searching his inside coat pocket. His cell phone has begun to vibrate.

Ellie looks over with interest.

He reads the text, puts the cell phone back into his coat pocket. Leans over to Ellie.

NATE

Excuse me.

As he leaves, Ellie's mother looks over, concerned.

INT. AMBASSADOR THEATRE LOBBY - LATER

The lobby is completely empty. Nate leans against a wall talking on his cell phone.

It is intermission, and the audience files into the lobby.

Nate closes his cell, looks around.

Ellie emerges from the seating area and searches for him.

He appears behind her from out of nowhere and takes her shoulders.

NATE

Sorry. I have to go.

ELLIE

Go? Where?

NATE

Back to LA. Give my apologies to you family.

ELLIE

What? Right now? Nate -

NATE

Enjoy the rest of the show, and I'll pick you up at baggage claim when you fly back to LA on Tuesday.

ELLIE

This is absurd! What about Christmas?

NATE

Ellie, I said I have to go. I will see you in a few days. Remember, we're going to Stan's get-together that night.

ELLIE

Yeah. Are you okay? Nate, you're scaring me.

He gives her a hug, kisses her cheek.

NATE

I didn't mean to. Everything's fine. It's business, that's all. See you soon.

He exits hastily as Ellie's mother approaches.

MARIE

What is it?

ELLIE

I don't know. I have no idea.

INT. NATE'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

Nate drinks Knob Creek on the rocks while snorting coke.

He stares at pictures on his bookcase.

Next to Mandy's photo is a photo of himself as a child with his grandparents.

Nate stares at the photo with his grandmother. His focus shifts to Mandy's photo.

He grabs his black leather jacket and heads for his front door.

INT. SPEARMINT RHINO GENTLEMEN'S CLUB - NIGHT

A stripper works the pole on the runway. She has her sexy Mrs. Santa outfit half-way off. Rock music blares.

A STRIP CLUB WAITRESS approaches Nate's table and sets a drink. He focuses on the TABLE DANCER in front of him.

STRIP CLUB WAITRESS

Knob Creek on the rocks. Sixteen.

He hands over a twenty and motions for her to keep the change. Sips his drink as he takes in the view. The table dance is over as the music changes.

He points to the Mrs. Santa dancer, who has just left the stage.

NATE

Can you get her for me, please?

TABLE DANCER

Sure.

He takes in the club as he waits, but he is numb. After a few moments, MRS. SANTA DANCER arrives. He hands her a bill.

MRS. SANTA DANCER

Where've you been?

NATE

Around.

She starts to dance, takes her top off.

NATE

I don't want a dance.

She puts her top back on and sits down.

MRS. SANTA DANCER

What do you want, sweetheart?

NATE

A little company.

MRS. SANTA DANCER

You shouldn't come around here anymore. You take care of yourself, Nate.

She stands up, kisses him on the cheek, caresses his face before putting the bill back on the table and walking away. He hasn't looked at her since she stood up.

EXT. SPEARMINT RHINO GENTLEMEN'S CLUB - LATER

Music blares as he drives recklessly away from the club.

EXT. MEN'S RESTROOM - NIGHT

Nate enters the public men's restroom.

INT. MEN'S RESTROOM - CONTINUOUS

He enters one of the stalls.

Nate's feet are visible underneath one stall door. Next to him, another man's feet are showing. The other man taps his foot.

Time stands still as Nate thinks. He glances at the hole.

Nate slowly stands up.

His hands grab the top of the stall as he thrusts his hips forward.

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY

NATE

I let a man suck my dick last night. At least I think I did. I'm pretty sure I did.

DR. BECKHAM

What do you mean? How could you not know?

NATE

I never saw him. I stuck it through this hole in the stall of a men's public bathroom.

DR. BECKHAM

Do you think that was wise?

NATE

Are you judging me?

DR. BECKHAM

How did it make you feel?

NATE

How do you think it made me feel? I came. It made me feel pretty damn good.

DR. BECKHAM

I don't think it made you feel good at all. Are you gay?

NATE

No.

DR. BECKHAM
Bisexual?

NATE
No.

DR. BECKHAM
Are you quite certain?

NATE
Yes.

DR. BECKHAM
Why did you do it?

NATE
Because I could.

EXT. LAX - NIGHT

A plane approaches the runway.

Nate's sedan whizzes in and out of ground-floor arrival lanes.

EXT. NATE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

He looks for Ellie.

She stands on the curb and waves him down.

His car pulls up beside her.

He jumps out and starts talking as he grabs her luggage and puts it in the trunk.

NATE
You wouldn't fucking believe it. I got a ticket for an improper lane change right here in the fucking terminal.

ELLIE
Well, that sucks.

NATE
I mean, look at all this traffic. And the cop was just sitting there on his bike, waiting.

INT. NATE'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

ELLIE

How was your Christmas?

She notices a Mammoth Mountain lift ticket on the console.

ELLIE

Oh you went to Mammoth, is that why you had to leave us like that?

NATE

I had to act fast on some property I was looking into.

Ellie lets it go.

NATE

Is it okay if you get ready at my place? It's alot closer to Stan's than yours, and I think they're already half-way through dinner.

ELLIE

No problem.

INT. STAN'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

Small dinner party for ten. Dinner is over. Guests have left the dinner table. A few are in the kitchen. Most are seated in the living room drinking, socializing.

DR. EDITH NEEDLEMAN, author of the book entitled "Reconnecting With Your Soulmate," captivates the guests.

DR. NEEDLEMAN

In order to reconnect with one's soulmate, a sincere appreciation for each other needs to exist from the start. Prior to the disconnection, I mean.

FEMALE DINNER GUEST #1

That is, if you and your soulmate recognize each other. Or if such a thing as a soulmate even exists. You're getting into territory that is as unique and individual as religion itself.

DR. NEEDLEMAN

They're one and the same! This subject would be meaningless to someone with no spiritual life, of course.

STAN (35) gay, walks up with the late-arriving couple.

STAN

Everybody, this is Ellie and Nate. Ellie literally just stepped off of a plane from New York a few hours ago, so...

ELLIE

I'm so sorry we missed dinner.

STAN

But you haven't missed the after-dinner cocktails. What can I get you?

ELLIE

A sparkling water for me, thanks. I think my stomach is a little upset from the flight.

NATE

Bourbon on the rocks, Knob Creek if you have it.

STAN

Make yourself at home, I'll be right back.

They take the only two available seats: Ellie on the far end of a sofa, and Nate in a single chair next to her.

ELLIE

(to Dr. Needleman)

I couldn't help but overhear, are you a spiritual healer?

Dr. Needleman stands up and shakes their hands.

DR. NEEDLEMAN

Doctor Edith Needleman.

(sits)

I am not a healer. Relationships themselves heal. The life lessons that we learn from each other are the healing process.

(MORE)

DR. NEEDLEMAN (cont'd)
I simply enlighten people to remain
in each other's lives and continue
that healing process.

ELLIE
How fascinating.

DR. NEEDLEMAN
It's quite fundamental, really.

MALE DINNER GUEST #1 picks up a copy of several books sitting
in a box by the front door. He thumbs through it.

MALE DINNER GUEST #1
And you explain in here how even I
am a participant in this healing
process?

On the cover is the clearly unmistakable close-up of Adam and
God's fingertips almost touching in Michelangelo's "The
Creation of Man" on the Sistine Chapel ceiling.

Dr. Needleman gives a hint of a modest smile.

DR. NEEDLEMAN
I brought enough copies for each of
you. My Christmas gift to
everyone.

Ellie and Nate's hands join, dangling in between the sofa and
the chair. The image is similar to the cover of the book.

STAN
Here you go, guys.

Stan walks up with the drinks. Sets them down and pulls up a
chair from the dinner table to join the group.

STAN
So, what's everyone doing tomorrow
night?

FEMALE DINNER GUEST #2
We're staying in for a nice, quiet
evening. Watch the ball drop on
TV.

MALE DINNER GUEST #2
Yeah, too many crazies running
around, you know?

STAN
David and I are going to the big
celebration downtown.

Stan's boyfriend DAVID (35) jumps in.

DAVID

Oh, if you can believe this, a
hundred twenty dollars to get in!

STAN

(to Nate and Ellie)
How about you guys?

NATE

Oh, I leave in the morning to go
back to Mammoth.

Ellie looks away from Nate. Her hand falls away from his.

She watches the room, aware that she must keep her emotions
in check right now.

STAN

Oh.

NATE

Yeah, a big storm just dumped a
bunch of snow on the mountain.

DAVID

Do you board or ski?

NATE

Board.

DAVID

I've been meaning to make the
switch to boarding, just can't seem
to commit to the challenge when I
already -

STAN

So, what are you doing then, Ellie?

ELLIE

I hate to do this, but my stomach
is really upset from the flight.
Honey, I think I need you to take
me home.

NATE

We just got here.

ELLIE

(covering)
I know. I'm so sorry.
(MORE)

ELLIE (cont'd)
My suitcase is at your place, I
think I packed a prescription that
should help me.

INT. NATE'S CAR - LATER

They drive in silence as two copies of Dr. Needleman's book sit on the console in between them. Ellie picks one up and stares at the cover.

NATE
Are you going to read it?

ELLIE
Yes.

She replaces her copy back on top of Nate's copy.

They continue to drive in silence. Nate looks over a few times, but Ellie focuses directly ahead of her.

INT. NATE'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

Nobody is in the apartment, but the lights have been left on.

An expensive vase sits on the table, filled with exotic flowers. A water tank with exotic fish as the aerator bubbles. A mini-bar filled with high-end spirits. A shaker and two silver martini glasses are on display. A fashionable high-end designer clock ticks. A snowboard leans against the wall. A painting hangs in the living room: replica of Antonello da Messina "the dead Christ supported by an angel."

Silence. Suddenly, the front door swings open. Ellie and Nate burst in. They make their way to the bedroom.

ELLIE
Why didn't you tell me beforehand?
You had the chance to tell me on
the way home from the airport! I
saw your lift ticket in the car!
You could have brought it up then!
I asked you how your trip went...
WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME?!

NATE
I don't know. I just... I didn't
think to.

ELLIE
We talked about this! You
specifically said we would fly back
together from New York and spend
New Year's together.

NATE
I know. I know.

INT. NATE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

ELLIE
Then you pull some crazy
disappearing act. I should be in
New York right now with my family.

NATE
I wanted to see about this
property, and now they want to
close right away.

Ellie
What? Do you think I'm stupid?
Who closes on a condo on New Year's
Eve? Who pulls a closing together
in a week? You think I don't know
what it takes to get to a closing?
Hello? I am talking to you. I own
a condo, Nate. I know what it
takes to get to closing, and you
don't pull a closing together in
two days.

(long pause)
What I need to know is what this
means to you and me.

NATE
What?

ELLIE
What I need to know is what this
means to you and me! That's what
you said... out there... on your
patio that night. What was that?

NATE
You can't hold me to that. I was a
mess!

ELLIE
Oh, my God! I can't believe what
I'm hearing! I am so hurt! You
have hurt me, Nate! This hurts!

She starts throwing things back into her luggage on the bed.

ELLIE
What's wrong with me? Oh, my God,
what was I thinking?
(MORE)

ELLIE (cont'd)

What is wrong with me? You told me you were difficult to date. Obviously something is seriously wrong here. Somebody else has done this to you! Who? Who did this to you? Who in your past has treated you this way? Nobody in their right mind could be this thoughtless, inconsiderate...

She closes the luggage. It's too big for her to carry, but she grabs it by the handle and struggles with it anyway, nearly falling down the stairs towards the front door.

ELLIE

...have a nice life, Nate!

NATE

What are you doing? At least let me drive you home.

ELLIE

Absolutely not!

NATE

Can I still call you?

She slaps him on the face... HARD.

He closes the door and heads for his bedroom.

INT. NATE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nate peers through the curtain at Ellie sitting on the curb.

EXT. NATE'S CONDO - CONTINUOUS

Ellie weeps, pulls her cell phone out.

ELLIE

Hey Blaire. Yeah, it's me. No, I'm not okay. I'm so glad I got a hold of you. I need a ride. Can you come pick me up?

INT. NATE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

He heads for the front door, hesitates.

NATE

Fuck.

He grabs his laptop, sits on his bed, e-mails Ellie.

ON THE MONITOR

Nate's words appear:

"It's not you, it's me. I'm not well. You deserve so much better than I could ever offer you right now."

TO ELLIE

Ellie sits at the curb next to her luggage, trying as best as she can to comfort herself.

INT. WALDORF ASTORIA ATRIUM RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Patrick and his parents celebrate the New Year with an elaborate dinner. A bottle-stand next to James holds an unopened bottle of Tattinger in anticipation of midnight.

MARIE

Patrick, do you remember the last time we were in the city? We had afternoon tea here.

PATRICK

Cucumber sandwiches never tasted so good. That was the same trip Sabrina and I took you guys to see The Lion King. Dad fell asleep -

JAMES

I did not.

PATRICK

Dad, you were snoring.

Everyone laughs.

MARIE

I wish Ellie was here.

INT. ELLIE'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ellie sits alone in the moonlight.

MARIE (V.O.)

It's almost midnight. Let's call her.

PATRICK (V.O.)

I'm pretty sure she's pre-occupied right now.

JAMES (V.O.)

She'll call us when she gets the chance.

CROWD (V.O.)

Ten...nine...eight...seven...six...
five...four...three...two...one!
HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Noise makers erupt. Crowd noise is at its height and slowly fades away. Silence.

Ellie walks to her phone, calls.

ELLIE

Hi, Den, it's Ellie. I know I haven't spoken to you in a while. But Happy New Year. I'm sorry I missed you, I'm sure you're out somewhere, having fun. Call me back if you like. Okay then, bye.

INT. PARENTS' GUEST BEDROOM - DAY

Moving boxes are stacked everywhere. Ellie is in the adjoining bathroom unseen. She walks fast-paced into the room, stops and stares.

She is overwhelmed at the sight of all of her possessions in one small room.

She continues to the bed and sits. Drags the first box within reach towards her and mulls through it.

Comes up with a picture of herself and Nate.

After looking at it for a few moments, she walks to the trash can and tosses it.

The door is open, but her father politely knocks anyway.

JAMES

How's it going in here? You settling in?

He sets a box down.

ELLIE

Thanks, Dad. It's strange to be living in the house again after all these years.

JAMES

Your Mom and I like having you
back.

He sits on the bed next to her.

ELLIE

I should have taken my old room.

JAMES

We thought you'd appreciate the
privacy of the bathroom there.

(beat)

I need you to help me out a little
bit.

ELLIE

Anything, Dad.

JAMES

The equity you earned from the sale
of your condo. I might need to
borrow some of it.

ELLIE

How much?

JAMES

All of it. This is just temporary.
I'll get it back to you as soon as
I can.

ELLIE

Whatever I can do to help.

INT. PARENTS' KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

MARIE

You did what?

JAMES

It's the only way.

MARIE

Whenever she needs something,
she'll have to come to you. You
will always have control over her.

INT. PARENTS' FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Ellie sits on the stairs and listens to the discussion in the
kitchen, just like she did when she was a kid.

JAMES (V.O.)
Alright, that's about enough.

MARIE (V.O.)
You've taken away her dignity, her independence.

JAMES (V.O.)
Independence? She is living under our roof again. Did you forget that?

The words fade into the distance as Ellie familiarly buries her head in her hands.

INT. A POT TO PAINT IN - NIGHT

After-hours, no customers. Patrick studies his accounting records. Hears the front door open and glances up to see his sister walk towards him.

PATRICK
Hey.

CRASH! A clay pottery figure shatters by him.

PATRICK
What the fuck!

ELLIE
Dad's broke.

PATRICK
What?

ELLIE
You heard me. Your sorry-ass little excuse for a business here!

PATRICK
You need to calm down and watch what you're -

ELLIE
Shut up! Shut the fuck up!

She attacks him, reaches out and grabs his throat.

She's not letting go.

His face begins to turn red. Finally, she releases and caves backward, exhausted.

They stare at each other, both gasping and exhausted.

Suddenly, she lunges for him again, slapping wildly.

He grabs her arms and pulls them down, bear-hugging her to get her to stop. Her resistance dwindles. He lets her go.

She stands there staring at him, heaving.

PATRICK

Get out.

She turns and walks briskly toward the front door. CRASH!! CRASH!! Knocks pottery off the shelves as she goes.

PATRICK

Grow up!

EXT. US HIGHWAY 395 NORTH - DAY

Nate's sedan winds along the snow-dusted highway.

EXT. CA STATE ROAD 203 WEST - LATER

A pair of hands puts a snow chain into place on the ground behind the rear right tire of a vehicle.

A CHAIN WORKER inspects the chains, then looks at the driver.

CHAIN WORKER

Okay, back up slowly.

The driver slowly backs the car up, tapping the brakes constantly. The chain worker lightly taps the vehicle.

CHAIN WORKER (V.O.)

Okay, that's it.

INT. NATE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Nate pulls up to the spot where the chain workers are located. His sedan comes to a stop.

The car door opens, and the door chimes.

EXT. NATE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Nate gets out of the car and stretches.

He reaches into the car to pop the trunk latch.

He walks back to the trunk, looks past his luggage, and grabs the tire chains.

The chain worker approaches the side of his car.

CHAIN WORKER
You need some help?

NATE
Yeah, sure.

He hands the box of tire chains to the worker.

He walks to the passenger side of the car and opens it.

As he leans in to get his wallet out of the glove compartment, Nate notices the two copies of "Reconnecting With Your Soulmate" on the dash. He grabs his wallet and both books, and closes the door.

NATE
How much?

CHAIN WORKER
Twenty suggested.

The chain worker is already busy laying the chains out. Nate hands him a twenty, puts his wallet in his back pocket, and walks to the trunk.

He grabs a gym bag, unzips the bag and re-arranges the clothes to make a space for the two books. He slides both copies of "Reconnecting With Your Soulmate" into the space between his clothes, zips the gym bag shut, and puts the bag back into its proper place beside the luggage.

He slams the trunk shut.

INT. ABORTION CLINIC ROOM - DAY

Ellie looks at her reflection in a mirrored operating lamp.

She begins to cry.

INT. ABORTION CLINIC WAITING ROOM - LATER

Ellie huddles on the far end of the sofa with a cup of water.

A nurse checks on her.

NURSE
Ms. Roberts, could I call someone to drive you home?

ELLIE
I was just leaving.

NURSE
(sitting next to Ellie)
You may want to consider grievance
counseling.

The nurse picks up a pamphlet on the side table and hands it
to Ellie.

Ellie does not reply.

NURSE
Take all the time you need.

The nurse rises and leaves.

INT. A POT TO PAINT IN - DAY

Ellie and Blaire sit at a table, painting.

Patrick tends to customers.

ELLIE
It's been two months. I haven't
heard from him.

BLAIRE
Girl, you have to move on.

ELLIE
He told me people keep leaving his
life and he doesn't know why. I
don't want to do that to him.

BLAIRE
Yeah, but this is different. He's
pushing you away. He doesn't want
you in his life.

ELLIE
That's a defense mechanism, I know
it.

BLAIRE
You can't make him love you.
That's not the way it works.

ELLIE
I made a commitment to him. I told
him I wasn't going anywhere. I
miss him. I do, Blaire, it hurts.
My heart physically hurts.

She bumps her paint bowl, getting paint on her clothes and spilling paint on the table and floor, completely over-reacts.

ELLIE
Oh, damn. Damnit!

Ellie kneels down to clean up the spilled paint.

BLAIRE
It's okay. Calm down. I'll get it!

Blaire gets down on her knees next to Ellie. Ellie holds onto her. The few customers in the studio turn to see the commotion. Patrick looks at Blaire with confusion, but she waves him off to stay with the customers.

ELLIE
He seems so sad. I just want him to be happy.

Ellie lays her head in Blaire's bosom. Blaire rocks her, calming her, stroking her hair.

INT. MAYFAIR MARKET - DAY

Ellie pushes her cart down the frozen vegetables aisle. She opens a freezer door, grabs a package of broccoli, and tosses it into her cart.

Continuing down the aisle, she rounds the corner and encounters Nate.

NATE
Hey, stranger.

ELLIE
(with pretense, fake)
Hi. And how are you?

NATE
(not sure about her demeanor)
Really busy. I've been putting alot of time in at Mammoth, trying to get the condo ready to rent.

ELLIE
Now, there's a smart thing to do.

NATE
Yeah. I'm almost done.

ELLIE
You're doing all of it yourself?

NATE
(wary)
Yeah. The hardest part has been the fireplace. I'm replacing the fireplace right now.

ELLIE
Oh, good. I hope it goes well. I'm happy for you.

NATE
Thanks, well, it was good to see you.

ELLIE
(syrupy sweet)
Good to see you, too.

He begins to pass her, but she stops him with a hand to the chest.

She steps into him, her mask fading away.

ELLIE
You know, you are the most fake person in LA that I know.

Nate takes it in, walks away.

Ellie suddenly becomes aware that she is in a public place.

INT. PARENTS' KITCHEN - LATER

Marie sits at the table, watching her daughter rummage through the refrigerator.

ELLIE
I don't know what came over me. Next thing I knew, these words were blurting out of my mouth. And I was shaking, Mom, shaking.

MARIE
Maybe you should get some help.

ELLIE
Help, what kind of help?

MARIE
Professional help.

This stops Ellie.

ELLIE

It is him, isn't it? It's not me,
is it? Or is it, is it me?

MARIE

It's not you. But this is
difficult for you. I think
somebody else, a professional,
objective point of view, could
help.

ELLIE

You think it's me.

(long pause)

I went up to Mammoth.

(pause)

He didn't invite me, so I invited
myself.

MARIE

What are you talking about?

ELLIE

New Year's Eve. We had plans, and
he went there instead of spending
it with me. I wanted to erase the
mystique, get rid of the idea that
he had any power to keep me from
being there. So, the next weekend,
I booked a hotel room and went
there myself. Skied a few days and
came back. The sad part is I kept
thinking that maybe I would run
into him while I was there. Show
him that it was no big deal, that I
belonged there, that I fit in.

MARIE

Ellie -

ELLIE

It is me, isn't it? It's me.

INT. PARENTS' GUEST BEDROOM - LATER

Ellie spreads out on the floor stretching her hamstrings.

Succumbing to the battle within her head, she picks up her
cell phone.

ELLIE

I can't believe I'm doing this.

Her breathing shortens in anticipation of the phone being answered.

NATE (V.O.)

This is Nate.

ELLIE

It's Ellie.

Silence lasts forever.

NATE (V.O.)

Hi.

ELLIE

I hope I'm not interrupting. I promise not to take too long. I want to apologize for my behavior at the grocery store. It's just that I've been very angry with you for the longest time, ever since the New Year's Eve debacle. I've held onto that anger, and I don't know why, and I don't know how to communicate when I'm angry.

NATE (V.O.)

I knew that.

ELLIE

You didn't deserve that, and I'm sorry.

NATE (V.O.)

I'm at work right now. Can I call you later to talk about this?

ELLIE

Okay, Nate.

She hangs up. Knows he will never call.

INT. OUR LADY OF THE ANGELS CATHEDRAL - DAY

Sunlight shines through upon the altar. Tourists wander. A few people are in the pews, some kneeling and praying, others simply sitting and taking in the view.

A child cries out, and the echo dissipates.

INT. CONFESSIONAL - CONTINUOUS

ELLIE

Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It's been a while since my last confession.

Ellie fidgets, searches for the right words. Speaks to an elderly PRIEST behind the screen between them.

ELLIE

How do you know when you truly love someone?

PRIEST

Are you happy when you're around this person?

ELLIE

No. I mean, I'm not around him anymore.

PRIEST

Why not?

No answer.

PRIEST

Do you want him to be happy?

ELLIE

Yes.

PRIEST

Then you truly love him. But you can love him from afar.

ELLIE

Am I being psychotic? Is there something wrong with me?

PRIEST

It is never wrong to love someone. True love is never rejected. You can love this person on a higher level. A level which needs no form of communication other than its mere existence. He may never consciously accept it, he might not even know how to accept it, but subconsciously, he will receive it. And that needs to be enough for you.

ELLIE
Father...

PRIEST
Yes.

ELLIE
(choking back tears)
Father...

PRIEST
Child, what is it?

He waits. Hears her crying softly.

PRIEST
Take your time.

She attempts to collect herself but only becomes more upset.
Finally, she responds.

ELLIE
I lost my child. My unborn child.

PRIEST
I pray for you and your loss. The
Lord works in mysterious ways -

ELLIE
I terminated the pregnancy.

He does not respond.

ELLIE
Tell me it's okay. Tell me I did
the right thing.

No answer.

ELLIE
Please. The emptiness.

PRIEST
You took your child's life.

ELLIE
It was my only choice.

PRIEST
The only choice is life.

ELLIE

You don't know the circumstances.
You don't know me.

PRIEST

What do you need to hear? That
Jesus died for your sins? Say ten
Hail Marys and everything will be
alright?

Ellie is a bundle of emotions.

PRIEST

This is between you and God.

Ellie gathers herself, leaves the confessional.

INT. OUR LADY OF THE ANGELS CATHEDRAL - CONTINUOUS

She stands outside of the confessional, facing the priest's
door. Wipes away her tears.

Stands strongly as she speaks to the priest through the
confessional door.

ELLIE

I already knew that.

She walks towards the altar, slips into a pew close to the
front and sits.

After several minutes, makes the sign of the cross, and
exits.

INT. ELLIE'S HALLWAY - DAY

Nate stands at the doorway, knocking. The door opens, and an
ELDERLY MAN (70s) is staring at him.

NATE

I was looking for Ellie, is she
here?

ELDERLY MAN

I live here now.

INT. PARENTS' GUEST BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ellie sleeps. Her cell phone rings six times as she sleeps
through it.

INT. BLAIRE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Blaire is showing Ellie her second bedroom.

BLAIRE

It's bigger than it looks, once we get all this junk out of here. You'd have to walk down the hallway to get to the bathroom. You might get tired of that when Matt sleeps over.

ELLIE

I can't. Thank you, but I can't. I would feel too guilty not being able to pay you anything.

BLAIRE

I wouldn't offer if I didn't want to.

Ellie's cell phone goes off.

ELLIE

I know, and you're sweet to do so.
(looks at cell phone)
It's him.

She stares at Blaire.

ELLIE

(answering)
This is Ellie.
(beat)
Hi. I'm well, I guess. I can't talk right now, I'm...
(long pause)
What time? Okay. Bye.

INT. NATE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nate and Ellie are fucking. They both come.

FADE OUT.

INT. NATE'S BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

Ellie sleeps peacefully. She stirs.

She rolls over. Her eyes open. She stares at Nate sleeping next to her.

She rises and meanders across the room, sporting Nate's undershirt.

The light from the bathroom escapes into the dark bedroom.

Nate's cell phone rings. He doesn't move. The toilet flushes, and Ellie saunters to the bedside.

The cell phone stops ringing just as Ellie picks it up. She sets it back down and climbs back into bed.

The cell phone goes off again. Ellie nudges Nate.

ELLIE

Get it.

He sleeps.

ELLIE

Your phone.

She reaches over him, grabs the cell phone, and places it next to his ear so that he wakes up.

NATE

Thanks.

He grabs the cell phone and flips it open.

NATE

Hello. Yes. What?
(sitting upright)
Could you hold on, please?

Searches for a pen and paper.

NATE

Okay, could you give that to me
again, please?

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER

Nate's GRANDMA, 80s, sleeps on a hospital bed with the sheets and blanket tucked tightly around her. Her arms are folded neatly on top. A live-in nurse, CLARA, keeps watch.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Ellie and Nate briskly advance down the sterile walkway.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Grandma sleeps as Ellie and Nate enter the room. Nate approaches the bedside and takes his grandmother's face in.

INT. HOSPITAL BATHROOM - LATER

Nate splashes his face with water. Grabs a paper towel and blots his face, then stares at his reflection in the mirror.

ELLIE (O.S.)

Nate?

He glances towards the door.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ellie stands a respectful distance from the bed when Nate appears from the bathroom.

GRANDMA

Well, my Lord, that is you in there.

He leans over the bed and gets eye-to-eye with his grandmother, strokes her hair, then takes her hand.

NATE

Hi, Grandma. How do you feel?

GRANDMA

I don't know, really. I don't really feel much of anything.

NATE

Well, then, I want some of whatever they gave you. Do you know what happened to you?

GRANDPA

I fell. I got up to use the bathroom, and I fell.

NATE

You broke your hip.

GRANDMA

Who is that?

NATE

Ellie? She was kind enough to come with me tonight to see you.

GRANDMA
She introduced herself when you weren't here. What I mean is, who is she?

NATE
She's... well -

GRANDMA
Come here, young lady. Let me see your face.

Ellie gets closer to the bed.

ELLIE
Hi.

GRANDMA
You are pretty.

ELLIE
Thank you.

GRANDMA
And I look like a mess. Clara, can you get me a brush.

CLARA
Yes, ma'am.

Clara searches for a hairbrush.

ELLIE
Oh, you look beautiful. Don't worry about that.

GRANDMA
No, I can't be meeting any friend of Nate's looking like this.

NATE
Grandma, stop! We don't care what you look like.

GRANDMA
You may not, but I do.

Clara approaches with a hairbrush. Ellie turns towards her.

ELLIE
May I?

Clara looks at Grandma.

GRANDMA
Thank you, very much.

Ellie accepts the brush and combs Grandma's hair.

ELLIE
You're welcome. I know I feel
better when I fix myself up.

NATE
(to Grandma)
I think it's better if you get some
rest.

ELLIE
You have such beautiful hair.

NATE
Ellie?

She glances over at him. He takes the brush from her and
pulls her away from the bedside.

NATE
(to Ellie)
I think it's better that she get
some rest.

ELLIE
Nate...

NATE
Can I speak with you outside?

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

NATE
I got it from here.

ELLIE
What?

NATE
I appreciate you coming down, but I
can handle it from here.

ELLIE
You want me to leave?

NATE
I don't see any reason for you to
have to stay up.

ELLIE

It's three o'clock in the morning,
Nate. What do you want me to do,
call a cab?

NATE

I think this is too overwhelming
for her, too exciting, to meet
somebody new. I think she really
needs to be resting instead.

ELLIE

Okay... good night, then. Tell
your grandmother I said good night,
and I hope she gets better fast.

NATE

I'll do that.

ELLIE

Wait, my purse -

She moves to enter the room again. He stops her.

NATE

I'll get it for you.

He leaves her standing in the hallway.

He re-emerges with the purse. He holds the purse out and
smiles briefly when she doesn't take it right away.

ELLIE

What does it take?

She takes the purse and walks away, her footsteps echoing
down the empty corridor.

INT. ART CLASS - DAY

Nate works on a painting we cannot see.

EXT. NATE'S CAR - SUNSET BLVD. - NIGHT

Nate reaches for his cell phone and dials a number.

NATE

Hey sexy. Sorry about last night.

INT. EQUINOX GYM - CONTINUOUS

Ellie waves goodbye to some people from her pilates class as
she speaks.

INTERCUT - TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

ELLIE

How's your grandmother?

NATE

Much better, recovering nicely.
Thanks for asking.

ELLIE

Will they have to do a hip
replacement?

NATE

Yeah, but I don't want to concern
you with all of that.

ELLIE

She seems like a wonderful person.
Why didn't you ever tell me about
her?

NATE

I have a few hours. Meet me at my
place?

Ellie is quite flabbergasted.

ELLIE

We don't really even know each
other, do we?

NATE

What.

ELLIE

I have no idea who you are, and
I've been...waiting for you. I
don't want to wait for you anymore.
Don't ever call me again.

NATE

(cautioning her)
I wouldn't do that.

ELLIE

Why not? Why not, Nate? You're
either incredibly arrogant, or
you're completely paralyzed with
fear. I'm tired of trying to
figure out which one it is.

NATE

I can see how you would think that,
but it's not...

(resolved)

I understand.

ELLIE

You are so much better than this.
And so am I.

NATE

A different place and time, maybe.

EXT. NATE'S CAR - LEXINGTON AVE AND MCCADDEN PL - LATER

LORNA (early 20s), damaged bleached blond hair, works the corner along with a RED-HEAD TRANSVESTITE. NATE'S car pulls up, and the window goes down.

NATE

(to red-head)

Get in.

LORNA

She's got a dick.

RED-HEAD TRANSVESTITE

What's your problem, bitch?

NATE

(to LORNA)

You then.

LORNA

(to transvestite)

I know him, honey. He couldn't
tell. He'd hurt you.

INT. HOLLYWOOD MOTEL ROOM - LATER

The room is dark, except for the light coming from the porn playing on the television. A simple chair is placed at the side of the bed. Nate sits in the chair, bare legs stretched out from either side and feet propped up on the bed.

Moans and groans from the porn permeate the room. Nate wears a plain white t-shirt. Holds a glass pipe in one hand and torch lighter in the other. Blows a puff of white smoke out and looks down between his legs.

NATE

Where are the poppers?

A hand reaches up holding a small brown bottle.

He puts the pipe and lighter down on a table beside him.
Grabs the bottle, sniffs deeply.

NATE
Stay down there.

He leans his head back.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD MOTEL SIGN - CONTINUOUS

Neon bulbs flicker. Cars go by.

INT. HOLLYWOOD MOTEL BATHROOM - LATER

Lorna shoots up. She attempts to put on some lipstick.
Holding herself up, she pulls a few pubic hairs out of her
mouth and spits into the sink.

NATE (V.O.)
What's taking so long. Come on,
get back here.

INT. HOLLYWOOD MOTEL LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

A FRONT DESK CLERK reads the morning newspaper.

INT. HOLLYWOOD MOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The television continues to illuminate Nate with his legs
spread eagle, face tilted back. The top of Lorna's blonde
hair can be seen just above the bed, covering Nate's crotch.

Nate props his head up, looks at TV. After a moment...

NATE
(still looking at TV)
Why'd you stop?

No response. He looks down at her.

Her head leans forward and to the side, against one leg.

He taps her head.

NATE
Hey.

Her eyes pop wide open as she now holds her head up on her
own, staring straight at him. Makes deep, coarse gasping
noises in an attempt to breathe.

Nate jumps up and slaps her face.

NATE
Hey, wake up! Wake up! Say
something!

He puts his arms under hers and tries to stand her up.

NATE
I'm gonna call 911...you don't say
something right now...I'm gonna
call 911.

She falls to the floor.

Adrenaline controls him. He searches through his pile of clothes on the floor, finds his cell phone in his trouser pocket, dials 911.

INT. HOLLYWOOD MOTEL BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

He tosses a bag of white powder into the toilet and flushes.

INT. HOLLYWOOD MOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

He administers CPR to Lorna. Moans and groans from the TV are background noise as he pumps her chest and counts.

NATE
One, two, three, four, five, six,
seven, eight, nine...

Approaching sirens become louder.

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

DR. BECKHAM
She OD'd, Nate. It's as simple as
that.

NATE
You didn't see the look on her
face. The sounds she was making.

DR. BECKHAM
I don't understand. You either let
her up or you didn't. Are you
saying you forced her head down and
refused to let her up even when you
knew she couldn't breathe?

NATE

No. I never touched her head. Not until I tapped it to get her to respond.

DR. BECKHAM

Then explain to me how you think she may have choked on your penis if you never forced her to service you, as you put it?

NATE

She'd worked up alot of saliva in her mouth. I think she may have passed out, and the saliva went down her windpipe. And when I woke her up, she choked on the saliva.

DR. BECKHAM

Everything that she did was strictly voluntary. Nothing was forced.

NATE

Yeah, but I'm the one who came up with the idea, the way things would go, the positioning and everything.

DR. BECKHAM

So?

NATE

And I coached her. So she could learn the way I wanted it done, the way I liked it. And then I kind of encouraged her, egged her on. So she'd get more into it. Until she got the hang of it, at least. Once she got the hang of it, I didn't have to do anything, or say anything.

DR. BECKHAM

Nate, this wasn't your fault. It wasn't. Couples tell each other all the time what they like and what they don't like. What feels good, and what doesn't feel good. That's the kind of communication that is required for two people to have a healthy and satisfying sexual relationship.

NATE

She was a prostitute.

DR. BECKHAM

Yes, she was. And you tried to save her life. You did everything you could to prevent her death. You did nothing questionable. It was a horrible, tragic accident.

(pause)

How long were you at the police station?

NATE

I don't know. An hour?

DR. BECKHAM

And they told you it was strictly voluntary to go with them, right?

He nods yes.

DR. BECKHAM

If there were any doubt at all, something would have happened by now.

EXT. MANDY'S HOUSE/NATE'S CAR - NIGHT

Nate sits in his car. Time passes.

He watches the front door open as a man exits the house without closing the door.

Mandy's husband, ROBERT, Caucasian (30s), walks down the driveway, past the mailbox. He crosses the street.

He walks straight to the car and stops at the driver side door. Stares at Nate.

Nate turns the ignition key for power, hits the down button.

The window slides down.

ROBERT

She's not even here.

INT. MANDY'S DEN - LATER

Robert lounges in an easy chair. Nate sits uncomfortably on one end of a large sofa, silently watching a basketball game.

A door opens, a woman's footsteps in high heels are heard entering the house, and the door closes.

The two men look at each other.

Robert reaches for the remote and turns the television off.

Sound of keys being set down as the footsteps approach. In anticipation, Nate stands up.

Mandy enters the room. She stops when she sees Nate.

Nate begins to speak, but nothing comes out.

Mandy looks at her husband.

MANDY

Honey?

Robert rises and crosses to his wife.

ROBERT

Resolve this.

MANDY

I'm not -

ROBERT

(quietly, to Mandy)

This is the only way to get rid of him for good.

Robert leaves the room.

MANDY stands there awkwardly. Struggles to speak.

MANDY

Have a seat.

They sit.

MANDY

This is all so...

(pause)

you look good.

NATE

I'm sorry for this, I don't think I ever expected to be doing this.

MANDY

Robert told me he'd seen you outside in your car a few times.

(MORE)

MANDY (cont'd)

It's been five years, Nate. What's going on here?

NATE

I don't know. The way you left, the way you acted after you left, I didn't feel as though I had the permission to approach you.

MANDY

I was dealing with the loss as best as I could.

NATE

Loss.

MANDY

Yes. Us. You.

NATE

It was a loss to you?

MANDY

Of course it was. I knew I had to move on, and the only way to do that was to cut you out.

NATE

It was cold and cruel.

MANDY

You did this.

He looks at her blankly.

MANDY

That's why I couldn't see you, or speak to you. It was like a death to me, like you had died. I grieved, Nate. That's how I grieved. How did you do it?

(long pause)

That's what you're doing now... still.

NATE

Why did you leave?

MANDY

I was stuck. You had no time for me. You know how you were. Your priorities were all screwed up. I don't think I was even a blip on your radar screen sometimes.

NATE

If you had told me -

MANDY

I did tell you. I did everything I could to let you know what I needed. I tried my best, but the loneliness... it was too much for me. But even worse than being alone, by myself, was being alone with you. Laying in bed next to you, but not being with you at all. I wanted a partner in life. I survived as long as I could. At some point I realized, it was either save myself or go down with a sinking ship.

NATE

Did you really love me?

MANDY

I did. I don't like seeing you like this. I've learned to look back on the good things - to remember the good times we had. Maybe you could learn to do that, too. I am with a wonderful man. I have a wonderful life. My time with you is over.

(studies him)

Tell me you see that.

NATE

I...

She moves next to him and takes his hands.

MANDY

You have to acknowledge that.

NATE

I don't want to.

MANDY

You have to.

NATE

I can't.

MANDY

Yes, you can. Your time with me is over. Say it.

NATE
Mandy...

MANDY
Say it! Say it.

Time stands still. Women give birth during this time.

NATE
My time with you is over.

INT. PARENTS' MASTER BATHROOM - NIGHT

Marie meticulously positions her elaborate moisturizers in their proper places.

James leans against the door frame, fresh Johnny Walker Red neat in hand.

MARIE
We're going to help Ellie open her own pilates studio.

JAMES
How do we do that?

MARIE
You cash in some of the holdings in the Schwab account, and I cash in some of my Coca-Cola stock.

Marie applies moisturizer to her décolletage.

MARIE
Take out a second mortgage, sell Patrick's house and have him move back in here as well, we'll do whatever we have to do.

James walks up behind her and speaks to her reflection in the mirror.

JAMES
You get more and more beautiful.

MARIE
And wiser, yes?

JAMES
Brilliantly so.

EXT. TENNIS COURT - DAY

A fluorescent yellow tennis ball floats in mid-air, a clear-blue sky behind it. A tennis racquet slams into it.

Stan grunts, lunges from his perched stance, stabs at ball.

Nate charges the net and pounces on the sitting-duck return.

Stan attempts to protect himself with his racquet as the mis-hit rockets past his head.

STAN

Out.

NATE

Sorry.

The men head back to their respective positions for the next serve.

NATE

Forty-fifteen.

Nate serves an ace. Stan makes no attempt to move, lets the ball fly by him.

Stan flips his racket into the air and lets it fall to the ground.

The duo sit at the bench in the middle of the court. Nate sips from a water bottle.

Stan towels off his neck.

STAN

(sarcastic)

That was fun.

(beat)

Hey, what's up with your girl, Ellie? She opened up a pilates studio on La Cienega.

NATE

Really.

STAN

Yeah. David and I saw her getting the place ready.

NATE

How's she doing?

STAN
She looked good.

NATE
Good. That's good.

EXT. KOREATOWN APARTMENT BUILDING - MORNING

Ellie stands in front of a very modest brick apartment building monitoring Den's driving as he attempts to back a U-Haul truck in between two parallel-parked cars and onto the grass.

Impatient drivers honk their horns during heavy Saturday afternoon traffic on Normandie. She is a long way from Westwood.

ELLIE
Okay, you're clear on this side.
You got plenty of room. Just a
straight shot backwards. Gun it to
get it over the curb.

The truck comes to a stop a few feet before the black iron security gate-of-a-front-door. Den puts the U-Haul in park and walks around to Ellie.

DEN
We're gonna have to prop the door
open with one of your boxes. Your
Dad's not coming?

ELLIE
No. I wanted to do this without
his help.

Ellie smiles, spies a rock and uses it to prop open the door. Den rolls up the back door of the truck.

INT. KOREATOWN APARTMENT - LATER

Small one-room studio. Boxes everywhere. Den assembles the bed frame.

He notices Ellie staring out the window, stops what he's doing and walks over to her.

ELLIE
Can you believe it? A crab-apple
tree in the middle of LA.

DEN
Are you okay?

ELLIE

Yeah. I am better than okay.
 (sits on the floor)
 For the first time in my life, I'm
 actually happy.

DEN

It shows. And the studio, how is
 it?

ELLIE

I need help with the marketing.
 Interested?

DEN

I don't know a thing about pilates.
 But I do know how to put a bed
 together.

Den smiles at her and resumes assembling the bed.

INT. NATE'S CONDO - DAY

Nate carries his art class project through the front door.

He sets the painting onto an easel and studies it.

Nate sets a ladder up in the middle of the room. Furniture
 and floors are covered with drop-cloths.

INT. PILATES STUDIO - DAY

An INTERVIEWEE (early 20s), female, peruses her resume,
 awaiting her interview.

The phone at the front desk buzzes. The RECEPTIONIST (early
 20s), female, answers the call.

RECEPTIONIST

Hi Ellie. Okay, I'll send her in.

She hangs up the receiver.

RECEPTIONIST

(to interviewee)

She's ready for you now. It's the
 last door on the left.

INT. PILATES OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Ellie reads the resume.

ELLIE

Do you have a boyfriend?

INTERVIEWEE

Excuse me?

ELLIE

I'm sorry. That was inappropriate. This all looks good, you're very qualified. I'm just wondering how much time you'd be able to put in to helping me out. I'd rather not hire too many instructors -

INTERVIEWEE

I don't.

ELLIE

You don't?

INTERVIEWEE

No boyfriend. I could work as many shifts as you like.

Knock at the door. Receptionist walks in.

RECEPTIONIST

I'm sorry to interrupt. There's a Mr. Galloway to see you.

ELLIE

Nate?

RECEPTIONIST

Uh-huh.

Ellie is caught off guard.

ELLIE

What does he want?

RECEPTIONIST

He didn't say.

ELLIE

Tell him I'm busy.

INT. PILATES STUDIO - LATER

Nate sits patiently.

The receptionist waters a plant.

The interviewee exits Ellie's office.

INTERVIEWEE

Thanks.

RECEPTIONIST

You're welcome.

Interviewee walks out the front door.

Nate looks up at the receptionist. He forces a smile.

INT. PILATES OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Ellie stares out the window, arms crossed.

INT. PILATES STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

The phone buzzes. Receptionist is now seated behind the counter and picks up the receiver.

RECEPTIONIST

Hi. Yes. Okay.

She hangs up the phone.

RECEPTIONIST

(awkwardly)

Mr. Galloway, Ms. Roberts isn't going to be able to see you right now.

NATE

Should I come another time?

The receptionist shrugs.

NATE

I understand. Tell her I'm sorry I missed her.

INT. EQUINOX GYM FLOOR - DAY

Nate bench-presses a barbell. Racks the bar, sits up to rest.

He looks across the gym floor to the glass-walled manager's office, where Ellie is having a conversation with the general manager.

WEIGHT LIFTER (O.S.)

Hey, could I get a spot?

Nate looks away from Ellie to see a WEIGHT LIFTER (20s), staring at him from a flat bench a few feet away.

NATE

Sure.

He walks over to the guy and gets into spotting position.

NATE

One, two, three, four...

As Nate watches the dumbbells, his eyes shift over to the manager's office.

Ellie is no longer there.

INT. EQUINOX GYM FLOOR WALKWAY - LATER

Nate stands in line at the water cooler. His turn comes up, and he leans forward.

The water spouts up onto his lips.

He finishes drinking, stands up.

He turns around to see Ellie ducking behind a corner, hiding.

He stands there a moment before walking the other way.

INT. EQUINOX EMPLOYEE LOUNGE - MOMENTS EARLIER

Ellie cleans out her locker, putting things into a box.

A PERSONAL TRAINER, 20s male, heats up a chicken breast and brown rice in the microwave.

PERSONAL TRAINER

That's a great location. Does it have parking?

ELLIE

Yeah. Right behind the building.

PERSONAL TRAINER

Need any trainers?

ELLIE

It's just pilates for now. But you never know.

PERSONAL TRAINER

This is me, just in case.

He hands her a business card.

She reads his name off the card and puts it in her pocket.

ELLIE

Okay, Sean.

The microwave dings, and the trainer retrieves his food.

She puts the last of her belongings into the box.

SEAN

Need help with that?

ELLIE

No, I got it.

INT. EQUINOX GYM FLOOR WALKWAY - CONTINUOUS

Ellie carries the box down the corridor leading to the gym floor.

She turns the corner to see Nate bent over the water cooler.

NOTE: same time and place as the previous scene, just a different angle, Ellie's perspective rather than Nate's perspective.

She ducks back behind the corner as Nate stands upright.

Ellie leans back against the wall.

After a moment, she walks around the corner and sees the back of Nate as he returns to his workout.

She stands there biting her lip.

Nate approaches a cable machine and begins triceps pushdowns.

INT. EQUINOX GYM FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Nate works his triceps on the universal cable machine.

Out of the corner of his eye, he sees Ellie walking past the gym floor with the box in her hands.

The weight stack slams down. Nate grabs his hand towel, wipes his forehead, and watches Ellie walk toward the exit.

INT. PILATES STUDIO - DAY

The receptionist places magazines out in the foyer.

Ellie comes through the front door.

She glances over the front counter as she heads towards her back office.

A book catches her eye, and she backtracks.

She stares at her copy of Dr. Edith Needleman's "Reconnecting With Your Soulmate."

She picks up the book.

ELLIE

Where did you get this?

RECEPTIONIST

It was left for you earlier. That guy from the other day -

ELLIE

Nate? Nate Galloway?

RECEPTIONIST

Yeah. He came in asking for you again. He asked me to give that to you.

Ellie stares at the book.

INT. KOREATOWN APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ellie sits on her bed, eating cereal, reading the book.

She glances over at her cell phone, stares at it for a moment, turns her attention back to the book.

After a moment, she walks over to her pants pocket, pulls out Sean's business card. Punches the keypad on her cell phone.

ELLIE

Sean? Hi, it's Ellie.

Ellie smiles with a confidence she hasn't felt in years.

INT. NATE'S CONDO - LATER

Nate lies on his back in the middle of his floor.

Motionless, hands folded on top of his belly, he stares at the ceiling.

He has painted a modern abstract interpretation of Michelangelo "The Creation of Man." This painting is not of God and Adam, but of a woman resembling Ellie and a man resembling Nate.

The woman reaches out to the man, about to give him life, her finger almost touching his.

Nate continues to stare at his painting.

EXT. OUR LADY OF THE ANGELS CATHEDRAL - DAY

The courtyard is occupied with tourists here and there, taking in the beauty of the Cathedral.

Nate's sedan is parallel parked on the side of the street opposite the Cathedral.

A black stretch limo sits in front of the Cathedral.

INT. NATE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Nate sits in silence, motionless, staring straight ahead.

He hears the Cathedral bells ring and turns his head towards the Cathedral.

The cathedral doors open, and a large crowd emerges.

A WEDDING PARTY makes its way through the crowd, which now forms a walkway for the bride and groom.

Ellie, the beautiful, blushing bride, emerges from the doorway, led by her dashing groom, Sean.

Rose petals descend on the happy couple as they make their way through the crowd.

A final kiss completes their journey to the limo before Ellie disappears inside.

Nate smiles slightly and subtly nods his head.

The limo pulls away as the crowd waves good-bye.

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY

DR. BECKHAM

You said you heard that Ellie got married.

NATE

You know, things didn't work out between us, but she is an amazing woman.

(beat)

Do you think it's possible to get my dick sucked too much?

Dr. Beckham stares at an oblivious Nate.

NATE

This girl was blowing me the other night, and I swear I couldn't feel anything. Like I had gone numb.

THE END.